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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

BY

SKY GEOFFREY GLABUSH

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

PAINTING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA


FALL 2006

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Final Visual Presentation

Submitted by Sky Geoffrey Glabush in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



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NAME OF AUTHOR: SKY GEOFFREY GLABUSH

TITLE OF THESIS: PROVISIONAL STRUCTURES: MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS GRANTED: MASTER OF FINE ARTS

YEAR THIS DEGREE WAS GRANTED: 2006

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DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

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I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections, University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Fine Arts Thesis Collection:

| TITLE | DATE | MEDIUM | SIZE |
|------------|------|---------------------------|---------|
| Red Square | 2006 | Oil on Paper on Canvas | 7' x 5' |

Artist Statement: Sky Glabush

Since enrolling at the University of Alberta in 2004, I have been exploring the idea of landscape both as an image and as a social construction. My interest in the constructed nature of landscape was piqued while living on the outskirts of Amsterdam beside an enormous housing project. While photographing these monolithic structures I came to the realization that the liberal and expansive ideas of early modern art such as pure form, honesty of materials, the eradication of ornament and artifice, and the acknowledgment of the flatness of the picture-plane, when applied to architecture and urban planning could become oppressive and inhuman. That is, what I saw as the rather poetic and imaginative solutions within the drive towards abstraction and purity in modern art became almost nightmarish when taken literally in the construction of social space.

Drawing on a variety of sources such as public art, abstract painting, illustration, architectural rendering, interior-design, and comic-book graphics, my initial research led me to create spaces populated with people and structures that in part represent a sense of mourning or nostalgia for a future that did not materialize. By creating sites inhabited by Dick and Jane characters playing alongside large welded-steel sculptures and modular, concrete housing projects, I was able to illustrate an almost literal interpretation of the dreams of progress and utopia encapsulated in the plans of early modernist architects, artists and designers. In their examination of the promises of modernity these paintings owe a great deal to the work of Neo Rauch who as Alison Gingeras suggests, is often

considered “the painter of the “failed Utopia of the eastern bloc.”¹ But whereas Rauch’s paintings are large, imposing and painterly, my work in the first year was small-scale and utilized the illustrator’s tools of gouache and fine, non-expressive paint application. This foray into the illustrative and overtly graphic was useful both as a means of embracing a pictorial language often considered as craft or “non-art,” and as a reaction to the grandiose and epic nature of modern painting. But it also presented a problem. I enjoyed the freedom to cut and paste and to draw from a large variety of sources but began feeling limited by my total reliance on printed materials such as photographs and illustrations for the development of my images.

Realizing a need for direct observation yet not wanting to work from architecture and the landscape *plein air*, I began constructing models of fictitious spaces within the studio environment. These cityscapes are fashioned out of cardboard, foamcore, duct-tape, scraps of plywood, and various forms of detritus found lying around the studio. The use of impoverished materials is important not only in its oblique criticism of contemporary building practices, but also because it allows me to work quickly and intuitively without making the sculptural objects precious or overly considered. I want the models to have the same sort of improvised fluidity as playing with LEGO or moving objects around in a sandbox. By creating my own surroundings I can continue to explore urban landscapes and architecture while remaining free to arrange these structures according to the compositional demands and limitations of the paintings. Thus my recent work allows me to question the relationships between modernist art and

¹ Gingeras, Alison. “Neo Rauch: Correspondence with Alison Gingeras.” “Dear Painter, Paint me. . .”: Painting the Figure since late Picabia. Pompidou: Paris. 2002. 96-100.

architecture while also maintaining a connection to painting both as abstraction and as observation of physical space.

Furthermore, by creating an artificial landscape out of the abandoned scraps of my studio and filling this space with models inspired by the syntax of modernist architecture, my own creative process becomes an allegory for the way in which the external world around me—the “real” landscape—is shaped by the remnants of an idea, the leftover fragments of the revolutionizing influence of thinkers like Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe. By fashioning this space out of the remains of a visual language that no longer possesses its original urgency and vigour, I am in a sense making paintings about the scarified terrain of both the physical world and the ideological geography of modernism. This self-conscious process of looking comes at a price however, and my work becomes a lament for the loss of conviction and certitude that propelled early modern artists. Commenting on the self-reflexive and variegated approach of current painting in contrast to the high seriousness of modernism, Barry Schwabsky writes:

Not only is our art gratuitous—anti-essentialist, if you will—in this sense, but it inherently holds the conviction that Modernist art was the product of a delusion to the extent that its makers really thought of it as other than gratuitous. (The greatness of Modernist Art was also, in part, a product of that delusion.)²

So while I accept the gratuitous nature of contemporary painting, my show “Provisional Structures” memorializes the impact of this great delusion and explores the depleted resources of the world it has left behind.

² Schwabsky, Barry. “Painting in the Interrogative Mode.” Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting. Phaidon: New York, 2002. 6-10.

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September 5 – 23, 2006

SKY CLUBUSH



poster design: kathleen jacques

provisional structures

MFA PRINTING

This exhibition is the final visual presentation
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Painting

OPENING RECEPTION

September 7, 2006
7:00 – 10:00 pm

GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday - Friday
Saturday

2007, 12, 13

September 5 – 23, 2006

SKY CLUBUSH



poster design: kathleen jacques

provisional structures

fab gallery

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MFA PAINTING

This exhibition is the final visual presentation
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Painting

OPENING RECEPTION

September 7, 2006

7:00 – 10:00 pm

GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday - Friday 10:00 am - 5:00 pm
Saturday 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Closed Sunday, Monday and
statutory holidays

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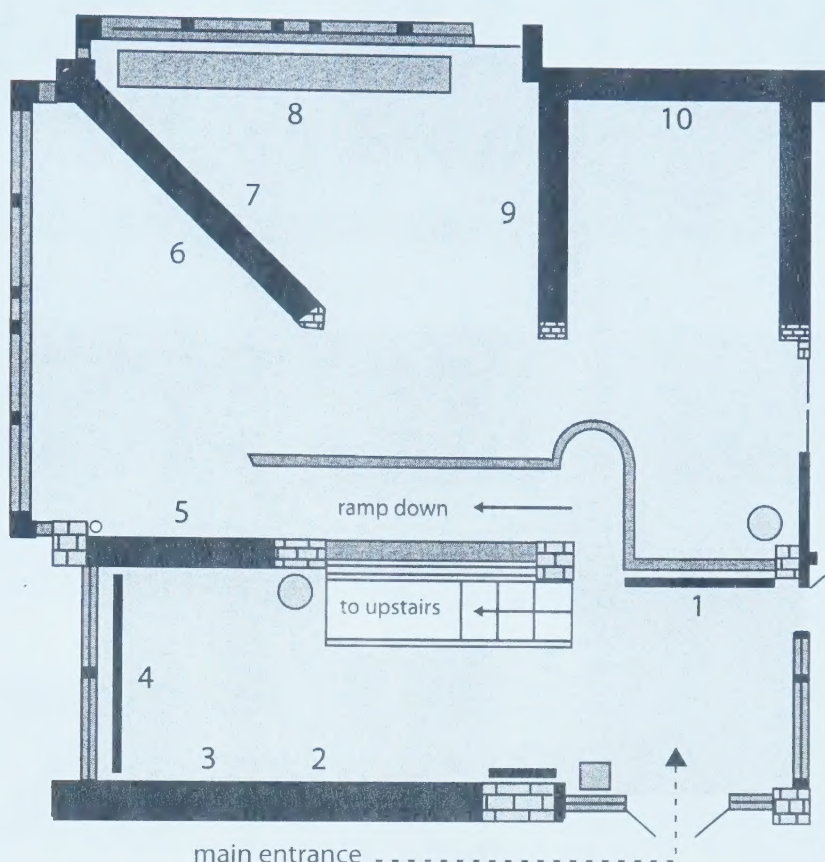
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FACULTY OF
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Sky Glabush | Provisional Structures



List of Works

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Social Planning Committee 2006 oil on paper mounted on canvas | 6 Constable in Fort McMurray 2006 oil on canvas |
| 2 The Landscape Tradition 2006 oil on paper mounted on canvas | 7 Study for Ballast 2006 oil on paper mounted on canvas |
| 3 Yellow Chair 2005 – 2006 oil on paper mounted on canvas | 8 Ozenfant's Studio 2006 oil on canvas |
| 4 Landscaping 2006 oil on paper mounted on canvas | 9 Ballast 2006 oil on paper mounted on canvas |
| 5 The Russian Steps 2006 oil on paper mounted on canvas | 10 Red Square 2006 oil on paper mounted on canvas |

All works courtesy of Douglas Udell Gallery

fab gallery
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